THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Government have taken several measures in the recent past to counter the illegal activities of touts and unauthorised agents in the grant of passport services to the public. These include de-recognition of travel agents as an authorised channel for servicing passport applications, issue of passport application forms free of charge, augmentation in the number of passport offices and collection centres in the country, despatch of passports directly to the addressees by post, etc. The activities of touts outside the RPO, Delhi, have been brought to the attention of the local police from time to lime and police action against them has been intensified. Investigations so far have not established any definite linkage between the touts and employees of the Passport Office at Delhi. However, vigilance is being strengthened at the Passport Office at Delhi and other places. Government is also making efforts to increase public awareness of the various facilities available at the Passport Offices so as to minimise the influence and activities of unauthorised agents. Passports are issued only after proper verification and examination of the requisite documents.

Discussion on Security Issues with USA

193. DR. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether Government have discussed their security issues with USA recently;

(b)if so, the details thereof; and

(c)if not, whether Government propose to undertake such strategic dialogue in view of threats from the neighbours?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) Over the last several months, the United States and India have been engaged in a wide ranging dialogue covering bilateral, regional and global issues including security-related issues. - During these meetings, we explained our security concerns and the rationale of our defence-related policies. The purpose of this dialogue has been to enable better understanding and appreciation of each other's points of view and to identify areas of cooperation.

Expenditure incurred on Foreign Tours of Union Ministers

194. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) The details of Union Ministers who undertook foreign tours during the cur rent year;

(b)The total expenditure incurred from public exchequer on their tours; and

(c)The purpose of each Minister's foreign trip?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Exposing of Pakistan's pursuit for Nuclear Weapons

195. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a)whether Government have conveyed their concern over US firms role in Pakistan nuclear programme;

(b)if so, the details thereof; and

(c)the other steps taken to expose Pakistan's clandestine pursuit of nuclear weapons?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) Reports in the media alleging the involvement of US firms in Pakistan's nuclear programme have been brought to the attention of our interlocutors in the US. High level discussions with US officials have been held on a range of subjects of mutual interest, including on